

CLAYTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Regular Business Meeting
7:00 P.M.

January 18, 2011

POST SUMMARY MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Eldrin Bell, Vice-Chairman Wole Ralph, Commissioner Sonna Singleton, Commissioner Michael Edmondson, Commissioner Gail B. Hambrick, and Clerk Shelby D. Haywood.

1. Chairman Bell called the meeting to order.
2. Invocation was led by Pastor Jeff Robinson of Total Renewal Church of God in Rex, Georgia. Pledge of allegiance to the flag was led by Chairman Bell.
3. Amended the agenda by switching item #6 (PROCLAMATION: "Clayton County Board of Commissioners Honors Lovejoy High School Senior Darrel Jones") to the place of item #5 (HEARING: Discussion of cause for removal of a Housing Authority Board member) and vice-versa; adding an emergency request for a water tower at the Annex III Building under item #7 (Consider requests of Rod Gray, Director of Central Services); adding remarks by the Board of the National Museum of Commercial Aviation before item #14 (Resolution 2011-14 – To approve the parameters of a ground lease to the National Museum of Commercial Aviation); reading into the record statements from the Chairman regarding violence against public officials; reading into the record a letter from the Chairman congratulating and thanking various county departments and staff for ensuring that the county was operational during the recent inclement weather; and noting that the Executive Session would pertain to litigation and a real estate purchase. The agenda was adopted, as amended, as all commissioners had copies before them. Vote unanimous.
4. Approved the January 4, 2011 Regular Business Meeting minutes. Vote unanimous.
5. PROCLAMATION: "Clayton County Board of Commissioners Honors Lovejoy High School Senior Darrel Jones." (NOTE: Darrel Jones performed a musical selection before the proclamation was presented. Clerk Haywood read the proclamation for the benefit of the audience, and group photos were taken.)
6. HEARING: Discussion of cause for removal of a Housing Authority Board member.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Ralph, second by Commissioner Singleton, to go out of the Regular Business Meeting and into the aforementioned hearing. Vote unanimous.

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Mr. Michael Smith, Chief Staff Attorney, acknowledged that the Board of Commissioners had received a complaint from a Clayton County Housing Authority Board member (Dorothy Morris) in December 2010 about the failure of another Housing Authority Board member (Alita Knox) to properly account for travel funds expended for one trip in 2009 and two (2) trips in 2010. Those trips included cash advances totaling \$528.00 (one trip was \$200.00 and the other was \$328.00). Ms. Knox also failed to provide documentation regarding hotel accommodations. Per Mr. Smith, the Housing Authority's travel policy has provided that members are to submit their retail reports within seven (7) days of a trip. Linda Valentine, Executive Director of the Clayton County Housing Authority, and the authority's accountant confirmed that they made numerous attempts to secure this documentation from Ms. Knox to no avail. As of this date, Mr. Smith further stated that such information has not been provided. As a matter of record, Mr. Smith noted that this matter was presented before the Board. The Board requested that legal counsel (Mr. Smith) notify Ms. Knox to appear before the Board for a "show cause" hearing. That notification letter was sent to Ms. Knox on December 22, 2010 concerning a hearing set for January 4, 2011. During the January 4, 2011 Regular Business Meeting, at the request of Ms. Knox, the Board delayed the hearing to today's date due to Ms. Knox's non-receipt of the notification letter until December 31, 2010. (NOTE: Ms. Knox had been out of town for the Christmas holidays.)

At this time, Ms. Knox appeared before the commissioners and thanked them for the opportunity to be heard. As the senior member of the Clayton County Housing Authority Board for the past four (4) years, she had served and was presently serving as the Vice-Chairwoman and the Treasurer. Ms. Knox further stated that a few of her accomplishments were being among the first of the housing commissioners to: 1) achieve national certification with the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO); 2) return a forensic audit which highlighted a need to change some procedures in the authority's finances; 3) participate in foreclosure resources activities to equip businesses with meaningful resources to prevent foreclosures; 4) participate in "Boots on the Ground," a grassroots organization that went door-to-door in neighborhoods educating those in need; 5) implement information from NAHRO conferences and classes to enhance the Housing Authority; i.e., fire prevention, which prevented extensive damage during a fire; and 6) propose environmental initiatives to protect the environment – all at a cost savings, etc.

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Per Ms. Knox, the hearing notification letter stated that she had several thousand dollars in unsettled travel expenses. She affirmed that the Housing Authority actually paid for all of her major travel expenses; i.e., airfare, hotel, and registration; therefore, the Housing Authority has receipts for those types of expenses. Ms. Knox further stated that she had submitted documentation of the other unsettled travel expenses (advance amounts). She believed this allegation did not follow protocol or go through the chain of command. If it had, this hearing would have never taken place. Since this hearing has occurred, however, the Board should be investigating all travel of the Housing Authority. Ms. Knox reiterated that if the Board had done a thorough investigation, it would have revealed a trip to Baltimore, Maryland not in conjunction with any meetings or training of the area housing authority and with no stated programs or purposes related to this authority. This trip alone cost the Housing Authority approximately \$800.00. A second scheduled trip to Reno, Nevada, which was cancelled at the last minute without explanation, cost the Housing Authority almost \$1,000.00 in lost registration, partial hotel expenses, and airfare.

According to Ms. Knox, a new housing commissioner (who had not been appointed to the Board more than two weeks) traveled to Reno and did not attend any core classes that would have educated her on how a housing authority operates. This trip was basically taken as a "social outing." Ms. Knox questioned such a use of "taxpayers' money." Again, she referenced the letter she had received from the legal counsel which was entitled "Cause for Removal." Ms. Knox felt there should be corrective measures considered before removing a member from a board (as in her case). Everyone has made mistakes, and she questioned who among the commissioners can say he or she is "perfect" or as the Bible says, "Who amongst you are without sin, cast the first stone." Ms. Knox candidly voiced that the commissioners were trying to hold her to a higher ethical standard than they held for themselves. An ethical policy was drafted for the commissioners over three (3) years ago, and they still have not addressed it as far as holding themselves accountable before the citizens of Clayton County. She alleged that the commissioners had changed ordinances not to benefit their constituents, but to humiliate and demoralize diligent, hard-working county employees; carry out "hidden agendas," and remove anyone who disagrees with or opposes any of their thoughts or ideas. Unlike her predecessors who refused to come before the commissioners today, she was present to call for real justice. Ms. Knox expressed that she had served her community proudly with due diligence and transparency; questioned what needed to be questioned concerning housing policies and

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procedures, not voted to approve chaotic property management with no documentation, and not accepted monies for housing related issues and projects, etc. According to Ms. Knox, removing her from the Clayton County Housing Authority will be a great loss of experience and knowledge as well as an extended cost to taxpayers. She concluded that she was an asset to the Clayton County Housing Authority and read the entire scripture of Psalm 64 as “food for thought” for the commissioners.

(NOTE: After a brief questioning by the Board, it was determined that Ms. Knox’s case would be deliberated upon in Executive Session and voted upon before the public in the Regular Business Meeting tonight. By unanimous vote, the Board then made a motion to go out of this hearing and resume the Regular Business Meeting.)

7. Rod Gray, Director of Central Services, presented these requests which resulted in the following actions. (NOTE: The Board voted on all of these items at once.)

1) Approved a request to rescind an award for a bid (RFB Pkg. #10-23; 7/13/10) with Citisco Food Service, located in Gainesville, Georgia, for a Clayton County Jail Walk-in Storage Freezer. This award was previously approved by the Board of Commissioners during a Regular Business Meeting on September 7, 2010. After the award, Citisco Food Service could not provide the equipment that was needed for the storage freezer. Vote unanimous.

2) Approved a request for a bid (RFB Pkg. #10-35; 10/13/10) for a Land Surveyor for Greenspace Acquisitions/Annual Contract, as requested by the Parks and Recreation Department. The recommendation is to award a contract to Point to Point Land Surveyors located in Locust Grove, Georgia. Vote unanimous.

3) Approved a request for a bid (RFB Pkg. #10-44; 11/30/10) to install Fencing at Flat Shoals Park, funded by a Clayton County Parks and Recreation Community Development Block Grant. Vote unanimous.

4) Approved a request for a bid (RFB Pkg. #10-47; 12/13/10) to purchase a Walk-in Storage Freezer for the Clayton County Jail Facility located at 9157 Tara Boulevard, Jonesboro, Georgia. The recommendation is to award the contract to Citisco Food Service, located in

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Gainesville, Georgia with the lowest fee of \$62,963.00. Funds are available through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant. Vote unanimous.

5) Approved an emergency request to purchase and install a Water Tower for the Annex III Building. The recommendation is to award the project to Trane for a turnkey installation at a cost of \$125,680.00. Funds are available in the Building Maintenance 4815 account. Vote unanimous.

8. Angela Jackson, Director of Finance, presented these two (2) items which resulted in the following actions:

1) Approved Budget Amendment #2-17 (FYE 6/30/11), from Parks and Recreation, in the amount of \$61,335.00 to increase the budget to carry forward donations received in the prior fiscal year. Donations are to be used to purchase recreation program expenses, supplies, after school snacks, and recreation program scholarships. Vote unanimous.

2) Approved a Request for Refund – Clean-up Bond, from Tri Region Group in Stockbridge, Georgia, in the amount of \$500.00. Vote unanimous.

9. Approved Resolution 2011-09 authorizing Clayton County to enter into an Affiliation Agreement on behalf of the Clayton County Juvenile Court with the Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocate Association; to accept grant funds and to set forth the terms and conditions under which the grant funds (\$38,249.03) will be utilized. No county match is required. Vote unanimous.

10. Approved Resolution 2011-10 authorizing Clayton County to enter into a Subgrant Award Agreement with the Office of the Governor Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and, in accordance therewith, accept grant funds (\$80,000.00) on behalf of the Clayton County District Attorney's Office for the Stop Violence Against Women Act. This grant requires a \$26,607.00 match. Vote unanimous.

11. Approved Resolution 2011-11 authorizing Clayton County to accept a donation (\$2,440.00) from the Lake Spivey Senior Men's Golf Association on behalf of the Clayton

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County Senior Services Aging Department to be used for the Meals on Wheels program. Vote unanimous.

12. Approved Resolution 2011-12 authorizing Clayton County to execute the Title V Permit Annual Compliance Certification for the Clayton County Landfill. Vote unanimous.

13. Approved Resolution 2011-13 authorizing Clayton County to convey interest via Quit Claim Deed in certain properties inadvertently conveyed to the County. Vote unanimous.

14. Approved an Order for Remission regarding State of Georgia vs. Shawn Marino and Anytime Bail Bonding, Inc. (Surety), (2009CR01287-08), in the amount of \$6,460.00. Vote unanimous.

15. Approved Resolution 2011-14 to approve the parameters of a ground lease to the National Museum of Commercial Aviation for public transportation use (park and ride lot at Interstate 75). Vote unanimous.

Director of Economic Development Grant Wainscott, joined by former State Representative Mike Glanton and the National Museum of Commercial Aviation Board Chairman (Captain) Chuck Maire, Jr., greeted the Board following the approval of Resolution 2011-14. Mr. Wainscott stated that both gentlemen are museum board members. He also acknowledged the presence of various museum supporters, volunteers, and other board members in the audience tonight. Mr. Mike Glanton and Captain Chuck Maire, Jr. praised the Board of Commissioners for its support and cooperation in this venture and looked forward to continuing to work with the Board in the future.

Clerk Haywood read into record some statements requested by Chairman Bell regarding acts against public officials (as a result of the recent act of violence against one of the nation's public officials, Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, in Tucson, Arizona).

Clerk Haywood also read into the record a Letter of Recognition to Clayton County Staff from Chairman Bell regarding the January 2011 Snowstorm Efforts (dated January 18, 2011). Various county staff members stood to be recognized and applauded for their efforts in ensuring that the county remain operational during the snowstorm that crippled all of Georgia from January 9th through January 12th.

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PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Tonya Lee Willis stated she was reminded of many popular clichés as she stood before the Board tonight, and they were “what goes around comes around”; “you reap what you sow”; and “people in glass houses should not throw stones.” Apparently, some of the county’s elected officials think they possess the skills of Harry Houdini. The Board’s attempt to target Housing Authority Commissioner Alita Knox is nothing short of a malicious vendetta that has been disguised as “smoke and mirrors” coupled with misdirection. She believed this witch hunt was intended to draw attention away from Commissioner Hambrick’s alleged misuse of Housing Authority funds. Although the initial violation may have been an understandable oversight, Commissioner Hambrick’s failure to come back with a public apology and restitution only makes her look guilty. To add insult to injury, Commissioner Hambrick has now ensnared other county commissioners in a spotlight to point a judgmental finger at Commissioner Knox. To the three (3) commissioners she was now referencing, Ms. Willis stated a word of caution – “if you lay down with dogs, you might get up with fleas.” Ms. Willis reminded the Board that this county has had new ethic statutes for more than three (3) years and she sat on the board that established them. They have yet to be implemented and are obviously sorely needed. She was not a person to burn bridges, but it is clear that all involved do not share this view. When she sees an injustice, however, Ms. Willis said she would not bite her tongue. For those commissioners who have trampled on the top of others who have helped them along, she believed that they would see those same people on their way down.

2. Mary Davis thanked Chairman Bell and the rest of the commissioners for allowing her to be heard on behalf of the Kinship Care program (recently named Grandparents Raising Grandchildren). As a spokesperson for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, she expressed appreciation to Chairman Bell for the turkey baskets and support of the program. Ms. Davis also recognized and gave accolades to the Board for the outstanding services that this program is providing to Clayton County. She admitted that she is personally a grandparent raising a 15

year-old granddaughter. Ms. Davis stated that she and her husband have been raising their granddaughter for the past fourteen years. Due to the fact that her husband is the sole provider of the family, Ms. Davis voiced that finances are tight. Thanks to the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, it makes it much easier to provide for their granddaughter. Some of the services

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that this program provides are gifts during the Christmas holidays, food baskets at Thanksgiving, help toward the purchase of school uniforms, support groups for grandparents, and much needed counseling for grandchildren. Without such services, grandparents would not be able to adequately provide for their grandchildren.

3. James Searcy, Chairman of the Clayton County Housing Authority Board, was present to get feedback from the commissioners regarding an e-mail forwarded on December 1, 2010 requesting the Board to expressly remove John Taylor Walker, Jr. from the Housing Authority Board following Mr. Walker's arrest on bribery charges. At that time, Chairman Bell called him and asked that the matter be addressed before the Housing Authority Board. Mr. Searcy indicated that the matter was presented to the Housing Authority Board on December 15, 2010, and he distributed a copy of those minutes for the commission record. The minutes reflected that the Housing Authority Board decided that the issue should go back to the Board of Commissioners for a determination. Mr. Searcy said the state code (8-3-50) on commissioners should be given special attention because Mr. Walker is presently an employee of the Clayton County Board of Education, and there is a stipulation that may present a conflict. Additionally, there is a tangible amount of \$1,115.00 for travel expenses that Mr. Walker recently incurred. That money has yet to be accounted for since Mr. Walker was arrested. Mr. Searcy then submitted his entire report as a matter of Board record for review and final determination.

4. Joe Eckler, President of IBPO Local #702, informed the Board that he was one of the police officers working shoulder to shoulder with Sheriff Kimbrough's deputies during the 2011 snowstorm. He helped to push the cars through the ice so that persons could get home. The IBPO Local #702 admires and stands behind the pro-active guidance that this Board has displayed for the elimination of sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace, particularly those issues associated with sexual harassment. According to document research from the federal government and Ivy League colleges, there are clusters of typical symptoms of sexual harassment victims. Since sexual harassment generally manifests itself as symptoms of high stress and anxiety, Mr. Eckler requested that the Board legislate what should be common sense to county department heads and allow the presence of a non-obstructive comforter with the victims (upon their request) during investigative interviews. He congratulated the Board in advance because he knew that all of the commissioners will make this happen. The IBPO is firm in its belief that this Board will always follow the path of what is right and just. Mr. Eckler looked forward to continuing the positive relationship that IBPO Local #702 has with this Board.

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5. Wayne Madden expressed that he was happy to be present tonight. In the future, he would be accompanied by his legal representative. Also, any requests he made would be put in the form of a letter. Mr. Madden stated that he was very disappointed in all of the 3-2 votes taken by this Board recently. He pointed out that Eldrin Bell is the Chairman, and he did not understand why there is a Chief of Staff position in place. The Chairman is a full-time employee who runs the day-to-day operations of the county, so the Chief of Staff is unnecessary. The Board should allow the Chairman to do his job. Regarding trip expenses, Mr. Madden said he wanted to see an account of the trips that the commissioners had taken since they had been in office; i.e., where the trips were taken, what the commissioners did on the trips, and justification for spending the amount of money that was spent. As far as hearings were concerned, Mr. Madden urged the Board to stop holding them in the evenings when people were tired and sleepy. He felt that people did not have "legal stuff" on their minds in the evening, and they end up making bad decisions.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Ralph, second by Commissioner Singleton, to go into Executive Session at 8:05 p.m. to discuss litigation, a real estate purchase, and Ms. Alita Knox's case. Vote unanimous.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Ralph, second by Chairman Bell, to go out of Executive Session at 8:18 p.m. Vote unanimous.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Ralph, second by Commissioner Singleton, to reconvene the Regular Business Meeting at 8:20 p.m. Vote unanimous.

Mr. Smith stated that the Board had made a decision on Ms. Knox's case and was ready to vote on it (per state law/O.C.G.A. § 8-3-53 to remove commissioners for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or misconduct while in office).

Motion by Vice-Chairman Bell, seconded by Commissioner Singleton, to remove Ms. Alita Knox from the Clayton County Housing Authority Board (based on such matters being found to warrant this action). The motion carried 3-2. Chairman Bell and Commissioner Edmondson opposed.

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Mr. Smith noted that the action would be reflected in the meeting minutes, and Clerk Haywood would communicate the Board's decision by letter to Ms. Knox to remove her from the Housing Authority Board. (NOTE: A copy of this letter would also be e-mailed to all of the commissioners, Ms. Valentine, Mr. Searcy, and Mr. Smith.)